



Marysville schools must make \$3M in budget cuts

[By Ashley Gebb/ADagebb](#)

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Marysville Joint Unified School District must slash \$3 million from next year's budget or face ongoing deficit spending, say district officials.

Trustees have authorized a partial list of proposed reductions and changes. They include eliminating at least two dozen teaching positions and a near-total reduction of the adult education program.

The board is expected to make its final decisions by March 6.

The proposed list of cuts presented during a special board meeting Tuesday tallied \$4.32 million, more than the \$3 million gap that needs to be closed.

Board members voted to preserve transportation services and tabled reductions in classified staff and grounds, and custodial departments for further discussion.

Among the authorized proposals was \$2.15 million in savings by laying off teachers at the kindergarten, first-through eighth-grade and high school levels and \$390,000 in savings by layoffs to all certificated staff in adult education, essentially shutting a program that has been in existence since 1919.

Tim Kelly, principal of Marysville Adult and Alternative Education, said he was saddened but not surprised, considering the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been previously slashed from his budget.

"Over the last several years, there have been cuts throughout the district," Kelly said. "There just isn't enough money to fund public education."

Every program and service proposed for reductions and changes has value to the students and community, he said, adding that he does not envy decisions board members have to make.

The district has cut \$4.29 million in the last two years through the elimination of teachers, athletic program reductions, freezing the ROTC program, adjusting principal and assistant principal positions and making various other programmatic, employee and administrative changes.

Ramiro Carreon, assistant superintendent of personnel services, said it is easy to blame political and economic causes for the reductions, but it's also a matter of reducing services where needed for 2012-13.

"We need to plan as good stewards to ensure our programs continue as far as into the future as they can, anticipating future cuts," he said. "We can't rely on the November (tax) initiative to plan ... We have to plan the worst-case scenario."

Gov. Jerry Brown has said California's education funding will sustain further cuts if voters do not approve November ballot measures to raise sales tax and income tax for the wealthy.

Marysville Joint Unified is still negotiating with its bargaining groups, primarily with the Marysville Teacher's Association, and progress has been made, Carreon said.

If agreements can be reached or there is anticipation of increased revenue, positions slated for layoff notices now can be restored at any time.

Trustee Frank Crawford opposes the proposed cuts. Rather, his proposal is to return to a 170-day school

year.

"I've looked at every option. I don't claim to be a strong economic person, but if you really look at the pros and cons and fairness of everything, if everyone pitches in the bad times and we really want to save these young teachers ... the best way to save them is for everyone to look at the 170-day school option," he said.

That was how Crawford, a retired teacher, taught for many years until the school year was extended to 180 days, and there is no reason it cannot be an effective learning period, he said. The downside to that approach to avoid pink slips is it reduces overall salaries.

"(But) what do I say to the third-grade teacher at Cedar Lane who wanted all her life to be a teacher, so the 30-year teacher can continue to make double what she's making?" he said. "I think people should rally together and share, whether in prosperity or the down time."

Trustee Jim Flurry said he agrees with the switch to the 170-day school year, which would need to be negotiated between the bargaining units, because it's the most equitable way to resolve the budget problem.

"At this time I do not feel we need to balance the budget on the backs of our classified employees," he said.

It's easier to lay off classified employees because of the more intense negotiation process with certificated staff, but classified cuts have already been used to balance past budgets, Flurry said.

"These are very serious cuts," Flurry said. "Now that we are in hard times, I hope everyone would be willing to work together to resolve his."

Crawford, who started his career with Marysville Joint Unified when Lindhurst High School opened in 1975, said he's never seen school budgets so strained, and it inevitably has taken a toll on the quality of education.

"It's an extreme embarrassment to me," he said. "After spending my whole life in education, to be now 47th in the country in a state where we started out in the top five."

What concerns Kelly as much if not more than this year's deficit is the real possibility the tax extensions will not pass in November.

"This will cripple K-12 and adult education as we know it," he said. "How can we give the kind of education these students deserve?"

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